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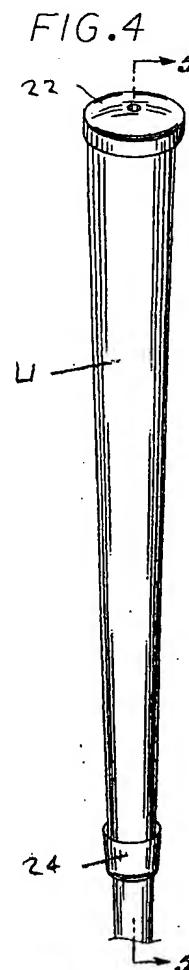
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(54) **Spiral wrap golf club grip**

(57) A golf club grip that includes a resilient strip spirally wrapped about an underlining sleeve having a cap and a nipple. The underside of the cap is formed with an upwardly facing circumferential slot that receives the upper edge of the strip. The nipple is formed with an upwardly facing groove that receives the lower portion of the strip.



Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to an improved grip assembly for golf clubs and other sporting equipment employing handles subject to shock when such devices are impacted.

[0002] It is well known that the shock generated by impact between a golf club and a golf ball can adversely affect muscle tissue and arm joints. The energy generated by such impact is usually of high frequency and short duration with rapid decay and which is often known as "impact shock." Tight grasping of a golf club grip to keep it from slipping in a user's hands contributes to such impact shock. The Applicant has previously developed resilient grips which successfully reduce or even eliminate impact shock to the muscle and arm joint of the users of golf clubs. See for example U.S. Pat. No. 5,797,813, granted to applicant Aug. 25, 1998. Such earlier grips utilize a polyurethane layer bonded to a felt layer to define a resilient strip, which is spirally wrapped around an underlisting sleeve, with such underlisting sleeve being slipped over the handle portion of a golf club shaft.

[0003] A problem encountered with such grips is the tendency of the spirally-wrapped resilient strip to unravel from the golf club handle when a golf club is removed from and inserted into a golf bag. This problem has existed since at least 1923 as evidenced by Howe U.S. Patent No. 1,528,190 wherein the inventor stated:

"After using a club, the golfer often throws his club violently into his bag; in doing so the handle end is of course within the bag.

[0004] When the club is thrown into the bag in this way, the end of the handle rubs along the inside of the bag and frequently results in stripping the end of the leather beyond the cord wrapping. Then the cord wrapping will become displaced or broken and it will be necessary to repair the handle."

[0005] My U.S. Patent No. 6,386,989 discloses a golf club grip wherein the lower end of the resilient strip is restrained from unraveling from the underlisting sleeve by forming the upper portion of the nipple of the sleeve with a circumferential groove which receives the lowermost edge of the strip, after which an outer peripheral lip defined by the groove is folded upwardly over such lower edge. The lip snugly encompasses the strip's lower edge and retains the lower edge against unraveling from the sleeve and hence the handle of the golf club during play, as well as when a golf club is inserted into and removed from a golf bag.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The golf club grip of the present invention solves the problem of the upper end of the resilient strip of a golf club grip unraveling from the handle of a golf

club during play and particularly when the golf club is removed from and inserted into a golf bag. Such problem is solved by forming the underside of the cap of the underlisting sleeve with a circumferential slot that snugly receives the upper edge of the resilient strip to prevent the strip from unraveling.

[0007] These and other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment which, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, illustrates by way of example the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008]

Fig. 1 is a broken perspective view showing the upper portion of a spirally-wrapped prior art golf club grip starting to unravel from the handle of a golf club; Fig. 2 is a top plan view of the golf club grip shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a cut-away side view showing a golf club provided with a prior art golf club grip being inserted into a golf bag resulting in the unraveling of Figs. 1 and 2;

Fig. 4 is a side view of an underlisting sleeve utilized in a spiral-wrap golf club grip embodying the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a vertical sectional view taken in enlarged scale along line 5-5 of Fig. 4;

Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view showing the upper portion of the underlisting sleeve of Fig. 5;

Fig. 7 is a horizontal view taken along line 7-7 of Fig. 6;

Fig. 8 is a broken top view of a resilient strip of a grip embodying the present invention;

Fig. 9 is a bottom view showing the underside of the grip of Fig. 8;

Fig. 10 is a vertical sectional view taken in enlarged scale along line 10-10 of Fig. 8;

Fig. 11 is a vertical sectional view taken in enlarged scale along line 11-11 of Fig. 8;

Fig. 12 is a broken side elevational view showing the strip of Figs. 8-10 about to be spirally-wrapped about the underlisting sleeve of Figs. 4-7;

Fig. 13 is a broken side elevational view taken in enlarged scale showing the leading edge of the resilient strip being manually forced into an upwardly extending circumferential slot formed in the underside of the cap of said underlisting sleeve;

Fig. 14 is broken side elevational view showing the resilient strip being spirally-wrapped about the underlisting sleeve;

Fig. 15 is a broken vertical sectional view taken in enlarged scale along line 15-15 of Fig. 14;

Figs. 16, 17 and 18 are broken side elevational views showing the lower portion of the resilient

sleeve being spirally wrapped around and secured to the lower portion of the underlisting sleeve; and Fig. 19 is a vertical cross-sectional view of grip embodying the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0009] Referring to the drawings, Figs. 1, 2 and 3 show a golf club C having a shaft 20 upon the handle H of which is installed a prior art resilient grip GPA. Grip GPA includes a polyurethane-felt strip S which is spirally wrapped about a resilient underlisting UPA similar to that shown and described in my U.S. Patent No. 6,386,989. A plurality of such prior art golf club grips are inserted into and removed from a conventional golf bag B during play. As noted in Fig. 3, during such insertion and removal, the grips GPA of the golf clubs have sliding contact with other golf club grips and the sides of the golf bag B. Such contact causes the upper end of the resilient strips to unravel from the golf club handles. In Figs. 1 and 2 there is shown the manner in which unraveling of the upper end 19 of resilient strip S takes place. Such unraveling not only detracts from the appearance of the grip, but is also distracting to a golfer when he takes a swing of the club because of the rough feel of the unraveled portion of the strip.

[0010] Referring now to Figs. 4 - 12, there are shown the components of a preferred form of golf club grip G embodying the present invention. Such grip includes resilient underlisting sleeve U, that includes an integral cap 22 at its upper end, while the lower end of the sleeve is formed with an integral nipple 24. The upper portion of nipple 24 is formed with a circumferential groove 25 for a purpose described hereinafter. It should be particularly noted that the underside of cap 22 is formed with a circumferentially extending slot 26 which receives the upper end of the resilient sleeve S of Figs. 8 - 11 in a manner to be described hereinafter.

[0011] More particularly, strip S is fabricated from first and second individual segments S1 and S2 of different widths, with segment S preferably being wider than segment S2. Segment S includes a bottom backing layer, 30 (preferably of felt) having an inner or bottom surface which is adhered to the aforescribed underlisting sleeve U. Segment S1 also includes a top layer of a suitable resilient plastic material, such as a smooth closed-pore polyurethane layer, generally designated 34, with the polyurethane layer being bonded to the upper surface of its adjacent bottom layer. The segment S1 may be formed with vertical air-passing perforations (not shown) such as described in my U.S. Patent No. 5,645,501 issued July 8, 1997. Segment S2 is similar in construction to segment S1 and includes an open-pored bottom backing layer, generally designated 36 (preferably of felt), having an inner or bottom surface which is adhered to underlisting sleeve U. Segment S2 also includes a top layer 40 of a suitable resilient plastic

material such as polyurethane layer, with the polyurethane layer being bonded to the upper surface of its adjacent backing layer 36. The polyurethane layer of each strip segment S1 and S2 may be formed in a conventional manner by coating a felt strip with one or more solutions of polyurethane (e.g., polyester or polyether) dissolved in a dimethyl formamide (DMF), immersing the coated strip in water baths to displace the DMF and cause the urethane to coagulate, and finally driving off the water by the application of pressure and heat. In this manner, pores are formed in the polyurethane layer, while the underside of the polyurethane layer is bonded to the upper surface of the felt layer. The thickness of the polyurethane layer is preferably about 0.2-1.40 millimeters and the thickness of the felt layer is about 0.7 - 1.90 millimeters.

[0012] The felt layers 30 and 36 serve as backing layers for the polyurethane layer 34 and polyurethane coating 40 so as to provide strength for the polyurethane.

The felt also cooperates with the polyurethane to assist in cushioning the shocks applied to a grip when a golf ball is struck by a golf club. It should be noted that other materials may be substituted for the felt as a backing layer to provide strength for the polyurethane and to cushion shocks, e.g., a synthetic plastic such as an ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, commonly known as EVA. The felt may be fabricated of conventional suitable materials such as nylon, cotton, polyester or the like.

[0013] The entire underside of backing layer 30 of segment S1 is provided with an adhesive 54 initially covered in a conventional manner by a peel-away tape 56. Peel-away tape 56 includes a thin band 56B which can be pulled off the main body of tape 56 to expose adhesive 54 disposed on one edge of segment S1, while the tapes' main body remains on the adhesive covering the remainder of the segment S1.

[0014] Referring now to Fig. 11, the side edges of the polyurethane layer 34 of segment S1 are formed with sidewardly and outwardly extending reinforcement side edges 46 and 47. The side edges of the polyurethane layer 40 of segment S2 are also formed with sidewardly and outwardly extending reinforcement side edges 48 and 49. In Fig. 11, the side edges of the felt layer 34 of segment S1 have been skived to form outwardly and upwardly slanted side edges 50 and 51. Similarly, the side edges of felt layer of segment S2 have been skived to form outwardly and upwardly slanted side edges 52 and 53. The underside of segment S2 is covered with an adhesive 58 initially covered by a peel-away tape 59 (Fig. 9). To combine segments S1 and S2 into composite strip S, reinforced side edge 49 of segment S2 is then placed on top of skived side edge 50 of segment S1 as shown in Fig. 11 and pressed onto segment S1. The strip S is then cut on both ends to provide the leading edge and trailing edges 60 and 62.

[0015] It should be particularly noted that the upper area of polyurethane layer 40 of segment S2 inwardly of the recessed side edges may be embossed with de-

pressed indicia I, such as the name of the manufacturer of the golf club grip. Such embossing serves not only as a decorative enhancement of the golf club grip, but additionally, the embossing process densifies the polyurethane layer 40 so as to reduce stretching of the second segment and thereby increase the hoop strength of the strip S. It is also desirable to mold the polyurethane layer 34 of segment S1 in a first color while polyurethane layer 40 of segment S2 is molded in a second color that contrasts with the first color. With this arrangement, a multicolored grip having a pleasing appearance will result when the strip S is spirally wrapped about an underlisting sleeve.

[0016] Referring now to Figs. 12 - 15, to secure the upper or leading edge 60 of resilient strip S within the circumferential slot 26 of cap 22, the upper edge of the strip is manually urged into the confines of the slot 26 (Fig. 13). After the upper edge of the strip S has been firmly positioned within the slot 26, the strip is spirally wrapped downwardly along the outer surface of the underlisting sleeve U (Fig. 14). When the strip S has been spirally wound to a position wherein its lower or trailing edge 62 is disposed in horizontal alignment with the lower portion of nipple groove 25 the lower end portion of the strip is manually urged into the confines of the groove by temporarily expanding the peripheral lip 70 formed outwardly of the groove so as to admit the lower edge of the strip into the groove. When the lip 70 returns to its original position, the lip will securely retain the lower end of the strip to the upper portion of the nipple as shown in Figs. 16 - 18. The resulting grip G embodying the present invention is shown in Fig. 19. Referring thereto, it will be seen that the upper end of strip S is restrained against unraveling by being locked in cap slot 26 while the lower end of such strip is restrained against unraveling by nipple lip 70. The aforescribed arrangement for securing the upper edge of the strip S is particularly useful in securely retaining a two-piece strip on the upper portion of the underlisting sleeve since the narrower strip segment has a tendency to become unraveled.

[0017] The spiral wrapping of the strip S about the underlisting U, and the positioning of the upper and lower edges of the strip within the slot 26 and groove 25 may take place when the underlisting sleeve is positioned upon a mandrel M in a conventional manner. After the strip has been secured upon the underlisting U, the sleeve and strip combination may be removed from the mandrel and slipped onto the handle portion of a golf club shaft.

[0018] It should be understood that various modifications and changes may be made with respect to the above-described embodiment without departing from the scope of the present invention. By way of example, the resilient strip may be of one-piece construction, rather than the two segment construction described hereinabove.

Claims

1. A golf club grip assembly (G), comprising:

a resilient underlisting sleeve (U) formed at its upper end with a cap (22) and at its lower end with a nipple (24),
a downwardly facing circumferential slot (26) formed on the underside of the cap (22);
a resilient strip (S) spirally wrapped about and adhered to the underlisting sleeve (U) between a lower portion of the cap (22) and the nipple (24), with an upper edge (60) of the resilient strip (S) being firmly disposed within the circumferential slot (26) to restrain an upper portion of the resilient strip (S) from unraveling from the underlisting sleeve (U).

2. A golf club grip assembly (G) as set forth in Claim 1, which includes an upwardly facing groove (25) formed in an upper portion of the nipple (24), an outer portion of the groove (25) being defined by a flexible circumferential lip, with the lip being expandible outwardly to securely retain a lower end of the resilient strip (S) within the groove (25) to cooperate with the cap slot (26) and thereby prevent the entire length of the strip (S) from unraveling from the underlisting sleeve (U).

3. A golf club grip assembly (G), as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 in which the resilient strip (S) is formed of first (51) and second (52) segments with an upper edge (60) of the one segment (51) of the resilient strip (S) being firmly disposed within the circumferential slot (26).

4. A method of making a golf club grip assembly (G), said method including:

providing a resilient underlisting sleeve (U) formed at its upper end with a cap (22) and at its lower end with a nipple (24), with a downwardly facing circumferential slot (26) being formed on the underside of the cap (22);
providing a resilient strip (S);
firmly disposing an upper edge (60) of the resilient strip (S) within the circumferential slot (26) to restrain an upper portion of the resilient strip (S) from unraveling from the underlisting sleeve (U); and
spirally wrapping and adhering said strip (S) to the underlisting sleeve (U) between a lower portion of the cap (22) and the nipple (24).

5. A method of making a golf club grip assembly (G), as claimed in claim 4 further comprising the steps of forming an upwardly facing groove (25) in the upper portion of the nipple (24), an outer portion of the

groove (25) being defined by a flexible lip (70) expanding the nipple lip outwardly to receive and then secure a lower end of the resilient strip (S) within the groove (25) to retain the lower portion of the strip (S) to a lower portion of the underlisting sleeve (U),
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whereby the cap slot (26) and nipple groove (25) cooperate to prevent the entire length of the resilient sleeve (S) from unraveling from the sleeve (U).

6. A method as set forth in Claim 5, wherein the resilient strip (S) is fabricated from first (51) and second (52) segments and an upper edge (60) of one of the segments (51) is disposed within the cap slot (26). 10
7. The method as set forth in Claim 6, which further includes providing a mandrel (M) and positioning the underlisting sleeve (U) upon the mandrel (U) as the resilient sleeve (S) is spirally-wrapped around, adhered to, and secured to said cap (22) and nipple (24), with the underlisting sleeve (S) thereafter being removed from the mandrel (M). 15 20

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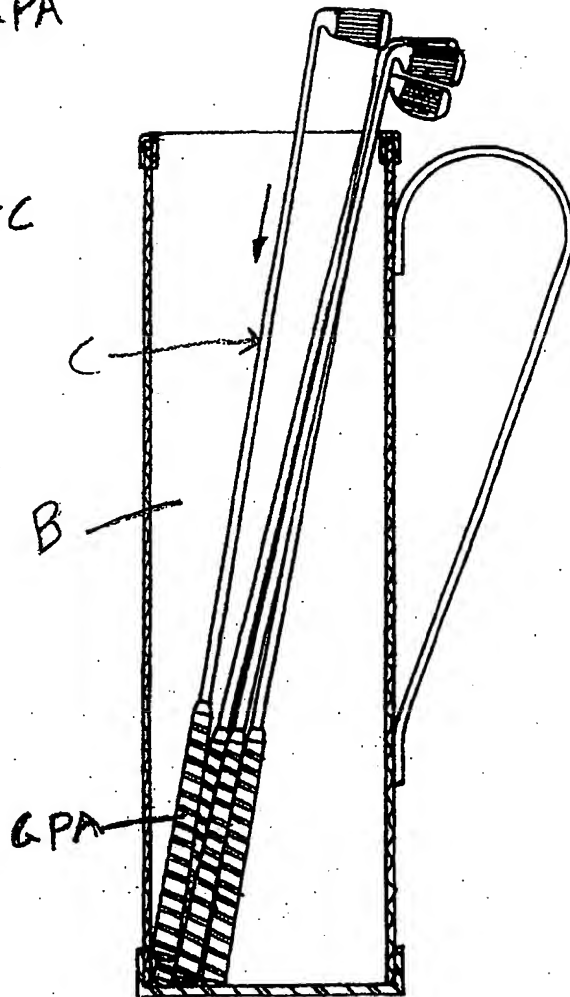
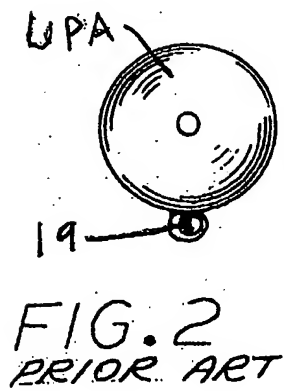
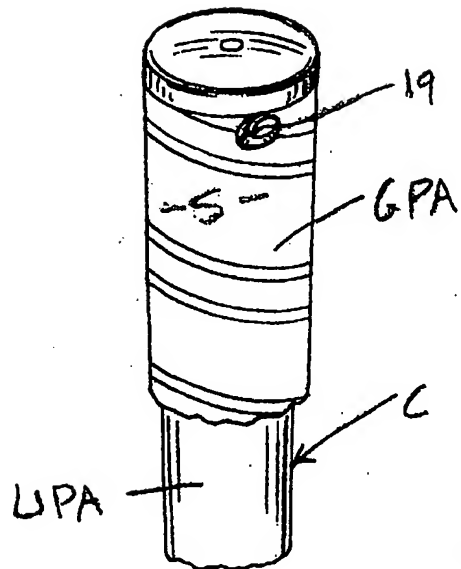
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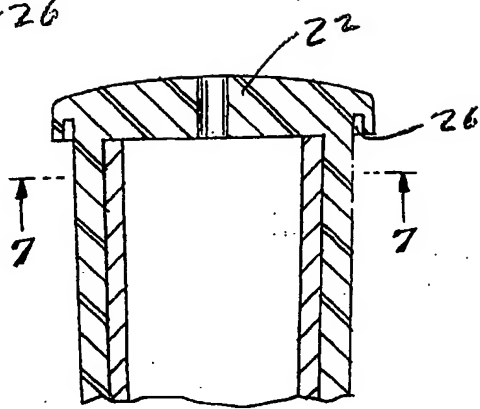
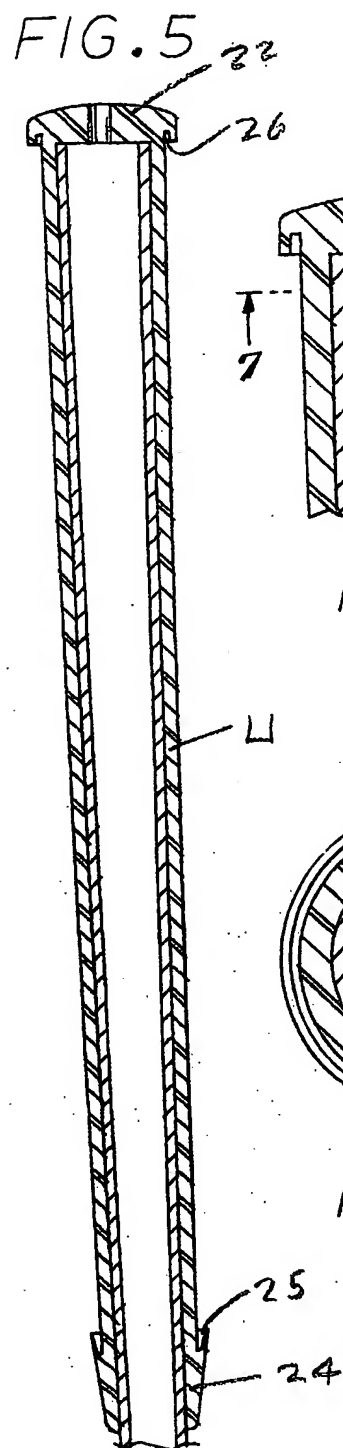
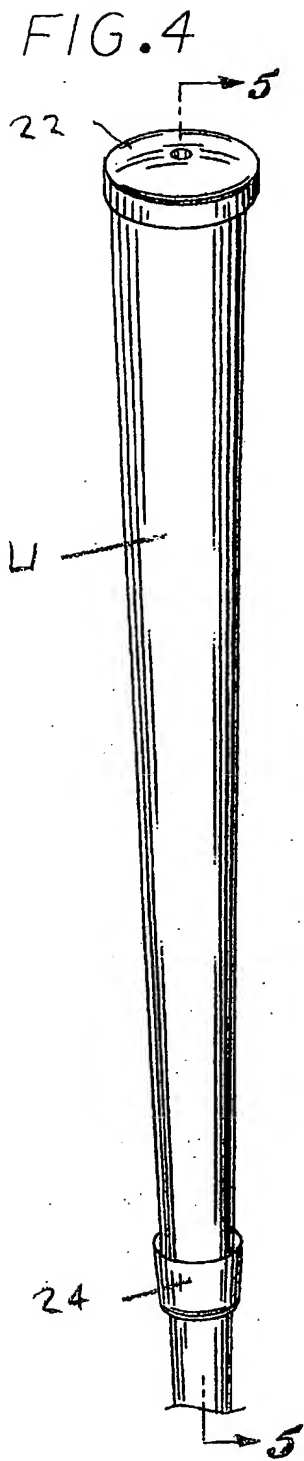


FIG. 6

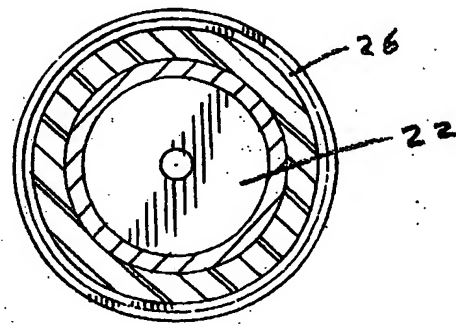
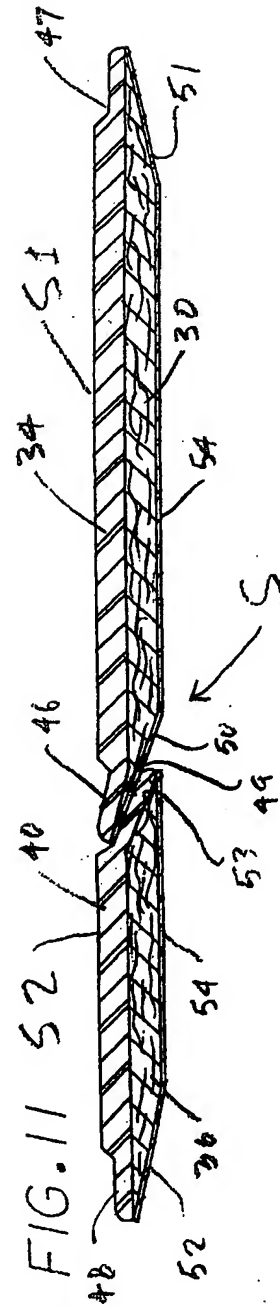
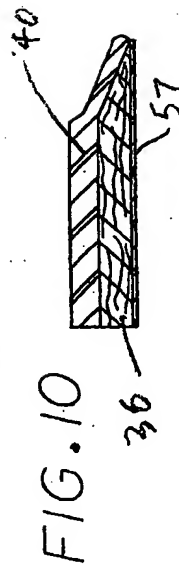
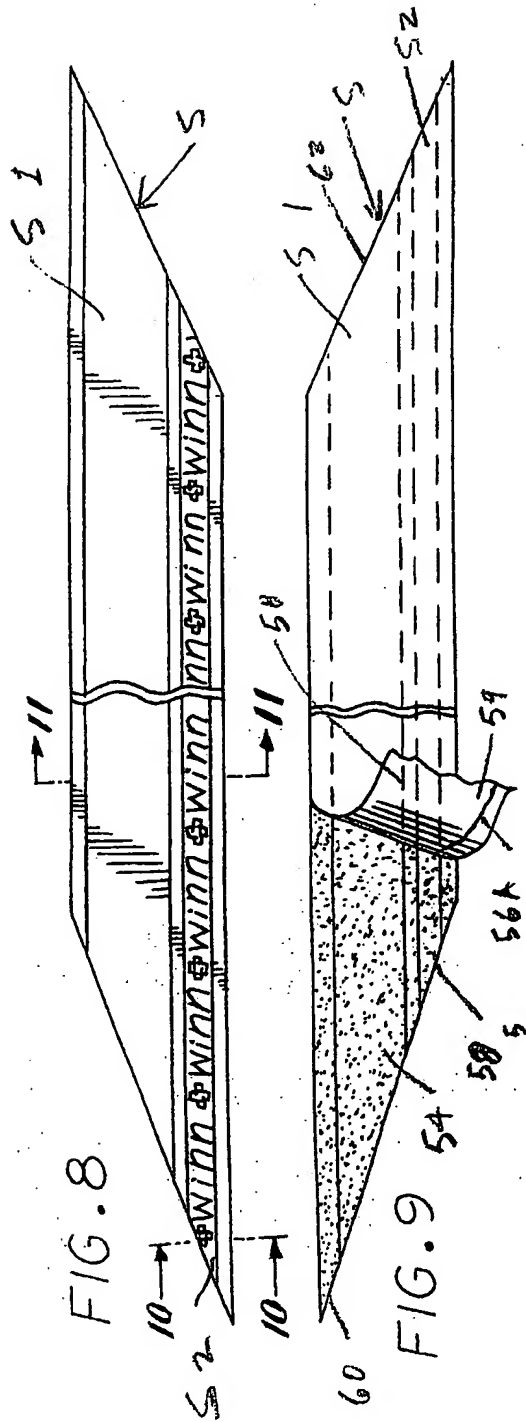
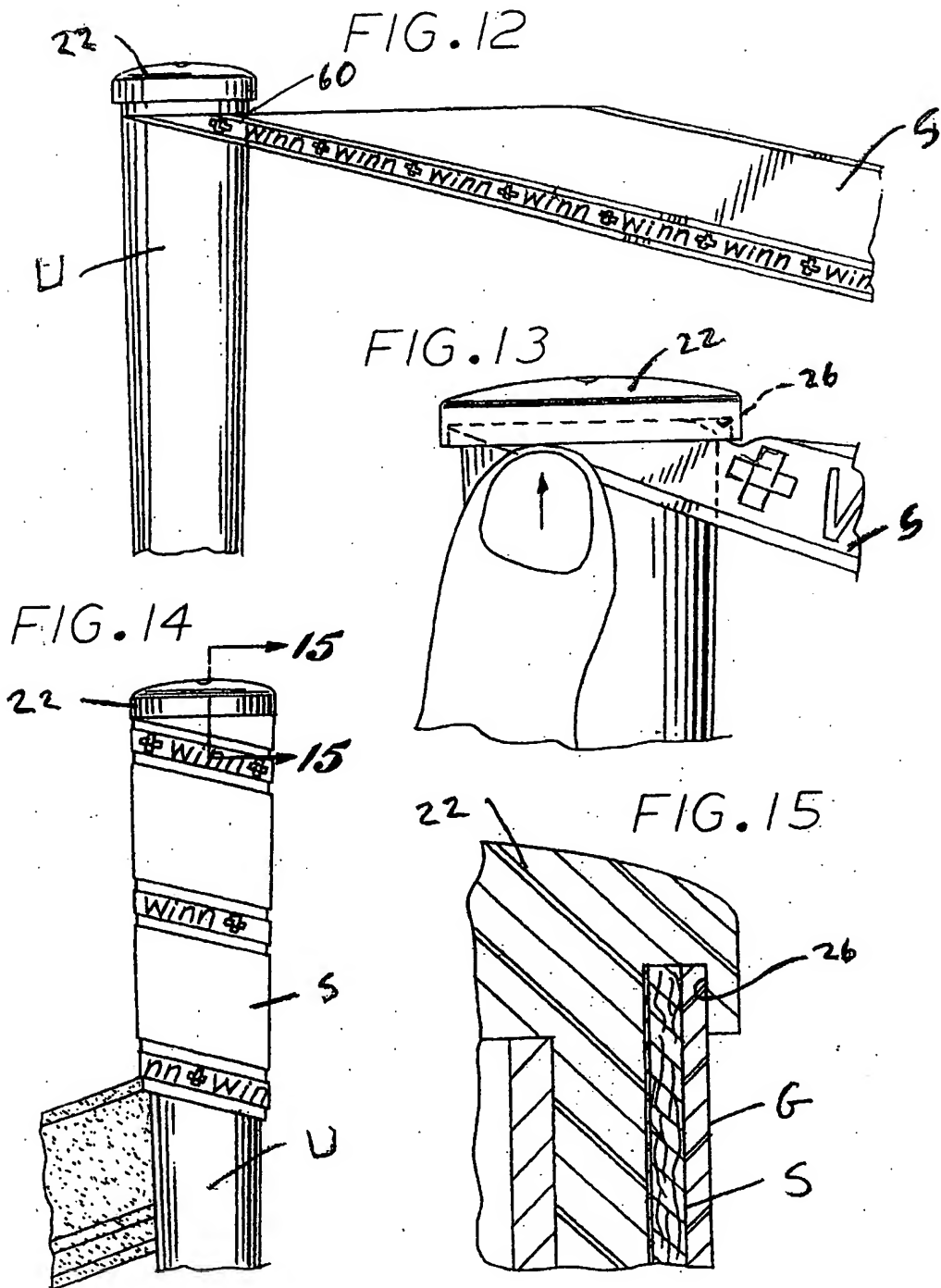
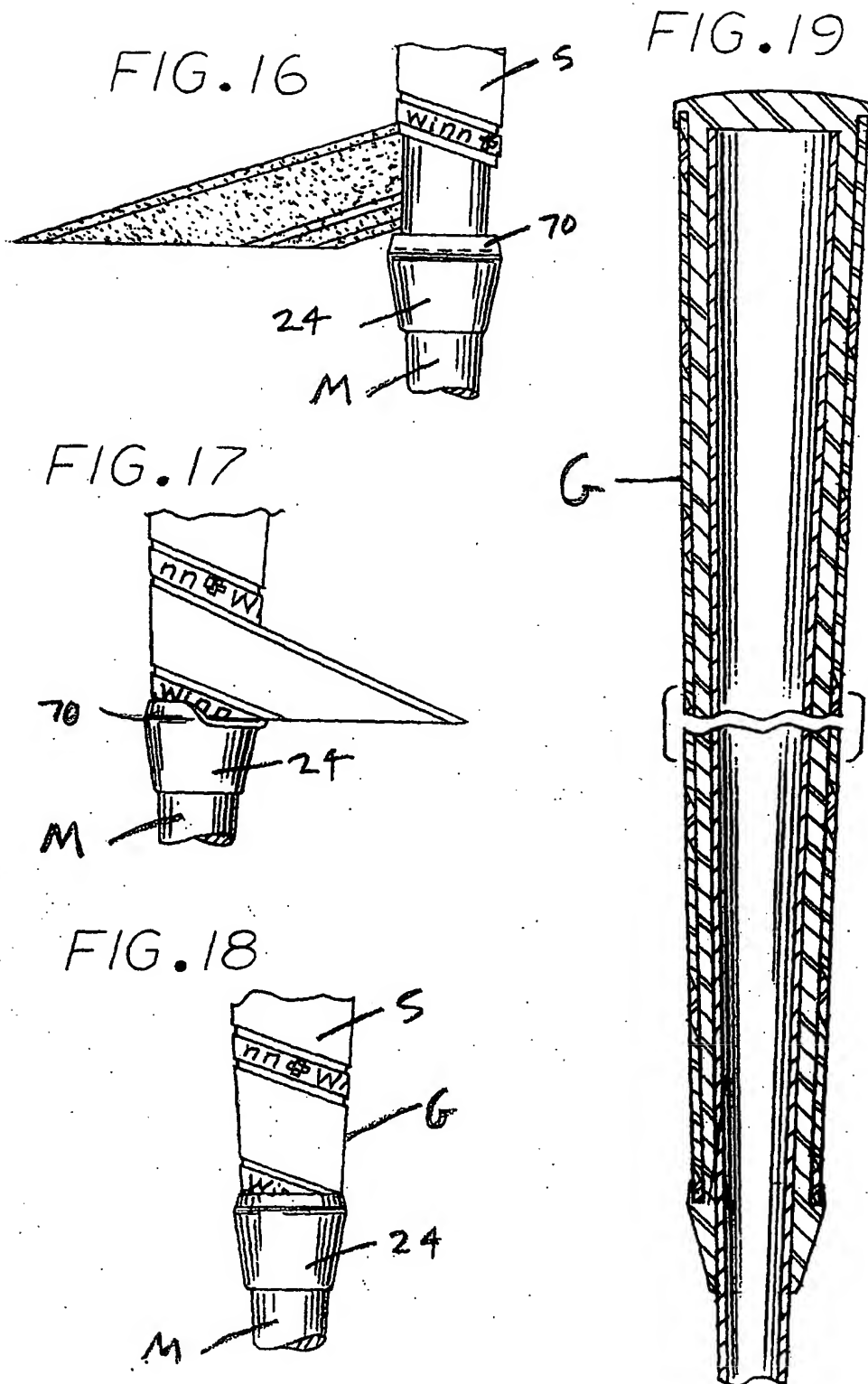


FIG. 7









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Application Number
EP 03 25 2999

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Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 15 September 2003	Examiner Murer, M
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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
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